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ABSTRACT

To describe the process by which young children accomplish individual emergent readings, it is necessary to move beyond holistic assessments and into micro-analysis. An extension of an existing emergent reading scale to the level of the t-unit (as applied to a transcription of a five-year-old Head Start child's dialogue with an adult) revealed: how a single emergent reading can incorporate a repertoire of dialogue and reading-like behaviors as sequentially arranged segments; how the reader developed momentum as she read; how repeated text segments were the most likely part of a text to be retrieved verbatim; and how, as readings became more narrative, the consistency within the predominant category increased. A second approach to emergent reading is to analyze the relationship between emergent readings and previous adult read-alouds. Adult read-alouds by Head Start teachers and subsequent emergent readings by Head Start children were tape recorded. Results indicated that some children incorporate into their emergent readings the content, and sometimes the form, of the teacher-child dialogue from read-alouds. Findings confirm results of earlier studies--only some children (especially those with the most extensive home literacy experience) adopt the language of read-alouds into their emergent readings. (Four figures of data are included; 16 references are attached.) (RS)

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San Francisco CA, April 22, 1992

ISSUES IN THE ANALYSIS OF EMERGENT READING

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ISSUES IN THE ANALYSIS OF EMERGENT READING

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Emergent reading has come to be recognized as an important tool for literacy learning and its assessment. Emergent reading gives children practice "acting like readers" as they explore the vocabulary, syntax and intonation of book language, the grammar of stories, the orientation and directionality of books and print, the linking of pictures and text, print and spoken language. In addition to its benefits for children, emergent reading provides teachers and researchers with a window into how young children read and learn about reading.

Following Holdaway's (1979) lead, Sulzby (1985) devised a developmental model of children's emergent reading based on criteria of narrative structure (story/non-story), language style (oral or written language style) and print awareness (attention to pictures or print). Sulzby's intent was to describe the development of children's emergent reading style. Therefore she has applied her scale holistically, assigning each emergent reading to a single category. But Sulzby has admitted the presence of multiple categories within a single reading. And while she found consistency in performance by children across multiple readings, she suggested that text features and familiarity are factors which can influence emergent reading performance. For example, her example of a high level written-like narrative was based on a predictable rhyming book.

Subsequent research on emergent reading has taken two perspectives: a diachronic one, which has used Sulzby's holistic scale as well as cohesive harmony analysis (Otto, 1991a) to examine how chidren develop in their knowledge and use of story language and structure, and a synchronic one, which seeks to uncover the processes within single emergent readings. Within the syncrhonic approach, researchers have explored textual and contextual factors which influence emergent reading performance. Textual factors include predictability, narrative complexity, genre, picture-print relationships and specialized vocabulary (Mason et al, 1989, Otto, 1990, Putnam, 1989, Elster, 1991a). Contextual factors include familiarity of the text, previous shared readings and adult assistance (Doake, 1985, Otto, 1991b, Martinez & Teale, 1988, Putnam, 1989, Pappas & Brown, 1989, Bus & Sulzby, 1990).

Two Methods of Analysis: In order to describe the processes by which young children accomplish individual emergent readings, it is necessary to move beyond holistic assessments and into micro-analysis.

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One promising approach is to extend Sulzby's emergent reading scale to the level of the t-unit. For example, Figure 1 shows the transcription of a reading of "Just Me and My Dad" (Mayer, 1977) done by a five-year-old child in a Head Start program. Rosa begins by engaging the adult listener in dialogue (lines 1-12) and labeling pictures of animals (lines 13-14). Then she progresses through following picture action (lines 15-16) and into oral language-like narrative (lines 17-32). She frames her reading with written-like verbatim segments of the phrase, "just me and my dad" (lines 1, 33), which is repeated several times in the original text.

This micro-analysis shows (a) how a single emergent reading can incorporate a repertoire of dialogue and reading-like behaviors as sequentially arranged segments, (b) how the reader develops momentum as she reads, progressing from non-narrative to narrative talk, and (c) how repeated text segments are the most likely part of a text to be retrieved verbatim. The most common coding in Rosa's reading is Oral Langauge Monologue, although that coding accounts for only 35% of the t-units in the reading. This type of micro-analysis of 74 emergent readings by Head Start preschoolers (Elster, 1991a) showed that on the average only 44% of t-units in a reading fell into the predominant category. The average number of categories within a single emergent reading was 3.6.

Another finding based on this micro-analysis suggests that as readings become more narrative and written-like, the consistency within the predominant category increases. For example, of the readings which were predominantly labelling and commenting, only 49.5 percent of the t-units were labelling and commenting units. For the readings which were predominantly written-like verbatim, 64.2 percent of units were written-like verbatim. These results suggest that consistency within emergent readings are developmental.

An underlying assumption of emergent reading research is that children develop their ability to read independently out of repeated experiences of being read to by adults (Holdaway, 1979, Sulzby, 1985, Doake, 1985). A second approach to emergent readings is to analyze the relationship between emergent readings and previous adult read-alouds. In a study related to the one already described (Elster, 1991b), I tape recorded both adult read-alouds by Head Start teachers and subsequent emergent readings by Head Start children. I was able to show that some children incorporate into their emergent readings the content, and sometimes the form, of teacher-child dialogue from read-alouds. Segments of group read-aloud sessions and subsequent emergent readings of "Just Me and My Dad" are shown in Figures 2-4. For example, in Figure 2a, the children and teacher discuss how the characters felt, based on interpretation of the pictures (lines 12-20). This information is included in many of the children's emergent readings (Figure 2b and

Figure 1, line 20). Again, in Figure 3a, the teacher picked up on a child's comment and asked the children to speculate on what the story character said as his fish was being stolen (lines 3-13). Pieces of this dialogue, which is not part of the original text, appeared in many of the children's emergent readings (Figure 3b and Figure 1, line 28). Finally, in Figure 4a, the teacher asks the children if the mother went camping (lines 12-16). Again, this information is included in many of the emergent readings (Figure 4b). What is particularly interesting is that Sharon retrieves not only the content but also the form of the teacher-child dialogue which took place.

These results confirm Putnam's (1989) findings that only some children - especially those with the most extensive home literacy experience - adopt the language of read-alouds into their emergent readings. In seeing what children chose to take into their emergent readings from the read-aloud discussions, one thinks of Ashton-Warner's (1963) "key vocabulary" - the personal "words of power" which hold special meaning for children and which may be the first words they learn to read and write. For the preschool children I studied, the words "mom" and "dad", "fire", "mad" and "sad", were of personal importance, so these words, whether drawn from discussion or the text, occurred and re-occurred in their emergent readings.

Conclusions & Future Directions: There are other issues in the analysis of emergent readings which I have not gone into, including uses of conventional story language ("Once upon a time, there was a little boy and his dad"), use of non-standard language forms ("Then he falled in the water"), and incorporation of personal experiences and background knowledge ("There the teddy bear took it").

The two analysis micro-analysis methods I have outlined expand our view of emergent reading as a psycholinguistic activity. Like conventional reading (Goodman, 1967), emergent reading draws on visual information (book pictures and print, as well as the presence of an audience) and non-visual information (memory of the language of the book and the discussion which surrounded it during prior read-alouds, knowledge of language and narrative conventions and personal experiences and background knowledge).

The analysis of emergent reading has generated new and more sophisticated knowledge of the processes involved in literacy acquisition by young children. This research will undoubtedly continue to be extended and synthesized. It is imperative that the research base includes study of children from diverse backgrounds. The observation and analysis of adult-child read-aloud sessions and subsequent emergent readings by children are important activities for researchers in early literacy. Participation in repeated read-alouds and emergent readings are also important learning opportunities for young children, an importance which needs to be more widely communicated to teachers of young children.

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Figure 1: Emergent Reading with T-Unit Analysis

1	Rosa:	Just ME* and my DAD. (pointing)	WLV**
2		Is these BOOTS?	DIA
3	Adult:	Yeah, it LOOKS like he's putting on boots.	-
4	Rosa:	So they can go CAMPing?	DIA
5	Adult:	M HM.	-
6	Rosa:	What is THIS. (points to bedroll)	DIA
7	Adult:	It think it's something to SLEEP on.	-
8	Rosa:	Is this a BILLfold (points to ax in case)	DIA
9	Adult:	No, it's an AX. It LOOKS like a billfold.	-
10	Rosa:	What is THIS. (points to fierce animal)	DIA
11	Adult:	What do you THINK. Some kind of ANimal?	-
12	Rosa:	Yeah.	-
13		A SPIder,.. FROG,... and a SNAKE.	LAB
14		A TENT,	LAB
15		and he's GONna SLEEP,	FOL
16		And HE'S stayin' UP.	FOL
17		He's pushed the BOAT too hard.	OLM
18		And the SPIder was on the BOAT.	OLM
19		And it's in the SLINKing.	FOL
20		And his DAD got MAD.	OLM
21		Then he FALLED in the WATer.	OLM
22		And he catched a big FISH.	OLM
23		Is HE gonna TAKE that? (points to bear)	DIA
24	Adult:	I don't know.	-
25	Rosa:	And he's COOKing THAT.	FOL
26		He's gonna EAT it.	FOL
27		And the bear TOOK it.	OLM
28		And h-... he said bring it BACK.	OLM
29		And his DAD read him a STORy.	OLM
30		He ate EGGS.	OLM
31		And he LOOKED like a MONster.	OLM
32		And he gave him a HUG.	OLM
33		Just ME and my DAD.	WLV

* Capitalization indicates a stressed syllable.

**Coding:
- DIA = Oral language dialogue
- LAB = Labelling
- FOL = Following the action
- OLM = Oral language monologue
- WLV = Written-language verbatim

Overall rating = Oral Language Monologue (OLM)
T-unit count: OLM = 9/26 = 35 %

Figure 2: Read-Aloud and Emergent Reading Samples - Page 5

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a. Read Aloud:

1	Ms. Ames:	"I wanted to take my dad for a RIDE in our caNOE.
2		But I LAUNCHED it TOO HARD."
3		What HAPpened.
4	Child:	It SUNK.
5	Ms. Ames:	It SUNK.
6	Child:	How- what did it mean LAUNCHED it too hard.
7	Ms. Ames:	It means, he PUSHED it out of the WATer too hard
8		and it tipped OVer.
9		It started to...
10	Children:	SINK.
11	Ms. Ames:	SINK.
12	Child:	And the dad got MAD at him.
13	Child:	And the dad got MAD at him.
14	Ms. Ames:	Do you think dad looks MAD?
15	Child:	YES.
16	Ms. Ames:	You THINK he looks mad?
17	Child:	YES.
18	Child:	How does <u>HE</u> look. (points to little critter)
18	Child:	SAD.
19	Child:	SAD.
20	Ms. Ames:	He looks kind of WORried.

b. Emergent Readings:

Amy: I pushed the boat down so hard, it was SINKing.
My DAD looked MAD. And I looked SAD.

Eric: And he PUSHED. And he got a HANDle.
And he pushed it MORE. And he just got MAD.
And the boat SINKED. And there's a SPIder on it.

Natalie: What is THIS. (points to the oar)
Adult: That's an OAR for rowing the BOAT with.
Natalie: HE'S MAD. (points to the dad)
There's that BEAR. (points to bear)

Figure 3: Read-Aloud and Emergent Reading Samples - Page 8

Text: None
Picture: A bear carries away the fish, while the little "critter" points at him, with his mouth open as if calling, and the father looks on.

a. Read-Aloud:

1 Ms. Ames: Did the BEAR get the fish?
2 Children: NO. YES.
3 Child: He said- and he YELLED at them. The BEAR.
4 Ms. Ames: He HOLlered at the bear?
5 What do you think he's SAYing to that bear.
6 Child: Uh, I don't know.
7 Child: "Let GO!"
8 Ms. Ames: "Let GO?"
9 Child: "GIVE me my FISH back!"
10 Ms. Ames: "GIVE me my FISH back!"
11 What ELSE might he be saying to that bear.
12 Child: "We're HUNGry!"
13 Ms. Ames: "We're HUNGry!"

b. Emergent Readings:

Amy: He took the FISH away. "HEY, THAT'S our FISH! GIVE it BACK! WE'RE hungry TOO!"
I looked GRUMPy, but the DAD looked SAD.

Mark: And he ATE it. "GIVE me that BACK!"

Sharon: There the TEDdy bear took it. "GIVE me my FOOD back! ME and my DAD HUNGry!"

Figure 4: Read-Aloud and Emergent Reading Samples - Page 1

a. Read-Aloud:

1	Ms. Ames:	"We went CAMPing, just ME and my DAD.
2		DAD drove the CAR because I'M too LITtle."
3		What's he taking CAMPing with him?
4	Child:	BOAT.
5	Ms. Ames:	A BOAT. What's this boat CALLED.
6	Child:	ROWboat.
7	Ms. Ames:	It's sort of LIKE a rowboat.
8		This is a canOE.
9	Child:	NEW?
10	Child:	I canOED before.
11	Child:	YEAH.
12	Ms. Ames:	WHO'S waving goodBYE.
13	Children:	MOM.
14	Ms. Ames:	Is SHE going?
15	Child:	NO.
16	Ms. Ames:	NO. Just ME and my DAD.

b. Emergent Readings:

Sharon: ME and my DADdy went CAMPing, with our BOAT.
And the m-.. WHO was WAVing.
Adult: WHO was WAVing.
Sharon: The MOMmy.

Amy: ONCE upon a TIME, there was a LITtle BOY and his DAD.
He went to CAMP. The MOM did not GO.
My DAD DRIVED because I am too little.

Chris: Me and my dad went camping. Just me and my dad.
Me and my dad went camping.

Mark: Just me and my dad. I'm too little drive my k-.. dad's car.